

# Mae Dickinson

*State Representative • District 95*

Spring, 2000

Dear Friend,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and increased benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

Please contact my office at 232-9647 if you have any questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,

*Mae Dickinson*



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# Health care is primary use of tobacco settlement

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.



*Rep. Dickinson studies legislation on the House floor.*

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

## ***Seniors also will see benefits***

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.

# Helping working men and women

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.



*Rep. Dickinson discusses legislation with Speaker John R. Gregg (D-Sandborn).*

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million over the next two years.

## Research and Development

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about improving efforts to stop a "brain drain" of young people from our state that started because we did not have the quality high-tech jobs that would convince them to stay. The legislature passed a proposal to encourage companies already working in Research and Development to expand their efforts while making Indiana more competitive in attracting new firms to our state. These are the kinds of jobs that can convince our college graduates to stay in the state after getting out of school.

# Medicaid eligibility definition adjusted

Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance. The General Assembly approved legislation that would replace the life-long requirement with a four-year disability requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year. New Hampshire is the only other state which requires a four-year disability.

With so many advances in health care, there is a treatment for almost every type of ailment. Medicaid was designed to help needy individuals, but the current system excludes so many people from qualifying for the aid that most other states would offer them.

This is not an attempt to provide free health care to all Hoosiers. It simply modifies the restrictions just enough so that a few more deserving individuals are able to qualify.

## New legislation impacts high school sports

The General Assembly addressed parent concerns about the Indiana High School Athletic Association through legislation that creates a panel to review appeals of rulings made by the IHSAA.

The panel will consist of parents, high school principals and athletic directors. In the past, appeals of IHSAA decisions often led to lengthy, expensive court fights. Now, the panel will address appeals and save students and parents time and money.

# Census 2000: Why fill out the form?

Census 2000 in the State of Indiana means that millions of dollars in federal funding and a congressional seat are at stake. Indiana's population is estimated to be around 6 million -- up from 5.5 million in 1990 (the last official U.S. Bureau of Census count).

You already may have received your federal Census form. The results will be used to determine things like federal highway money and whether or not Indiana will retain all ten of its U.S. House of Representatives seats.

Forms will be available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Korean. Guides to answering the form will be available in many other languages.

The Census Bureau cannot share your information with others according to the law. This includes Immigration and Naturalization Services, welfare services, Internal Revenue Service, police, courts and the military.

## Census facts and figures

- Census officials estimate that they missed more than 8.8 million people in 1990, mostly children, minorities and the poor. That figure includes 12.2 percent of the American Indians living on reservations.
- The federal government plans to spend \$170 million on an advertising campaign to inform and educate people about the census.
  - According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, there is
    - one birth every 8 seconds
    - one death every 13 seconds
    - one international migrant (net) every 45 seconds
    - one federal U.S. citizen returning every 4,860 seconds
    - for a net gain of one person every 16 seconds.

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